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Questions and Answers About Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center

1. Patient Admission Procedures

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the Federal Government's agency for medical research. At the NIH, medical research is divided into two types—laboratory and clinical. The laboratory studies are in the fields of biology, chemistry, physics, and other sciences related to health and medicine. The clinical research involves the study of human health and disease.

The Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center is a medical research center and hospital that is part of the NIH in Bethesda, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C. The hospital portion of the Clinical Center is especially designed for medical research. At full capacity it can house about 540 carefully selected patients. The Clinical Center provides nursing and medical care without charge for patients who are being studied in clinical research programs. However, the Clinical Center generally cannot pay transportation costs.

2. How Patients Are Selected

A patient may be treated at the Clinical Center only if his or her case fits into a research project. Each project is designed to answer scientific questions

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and has specific medical eligibility requirements. For this reason, patients must be referred by their own physicians, who can supply the Clinical Center with appropriate medical information, such as the patient's diagnosis and relevant clinical details.

The number of beds available for a particular project and the length of the waiting list of qualified patients also are important in determining whether and when an individual can be admitted. Research on a particular disease may be such that only one or two patients can be studied at a given time.

3. Patient Referrals

Patients are admitted to the Clinical Center only on referral by their physician and only for research purposes. A complete diagnosis and medical history is necessary for admission. Patients interested in being admitted should follow these steps:

1. The patient should first discuss treatment at NIH with his or her own doctor. If the physician feels that the individual might benefit by participating in a cancer research study at NIH, the physician may write to the Clinical Director, National Cancer Institute, Building 10, Room 12N214, Bethesda, MD 20892 or call the National Cancer Institute's Public

Inquiries Office at 301-496-5583. When writing, the referring physician must furnish a full medical report about the patient.

2. The medical report is studied by National Cancer Institute (NCI) scientists to determine whether the patient's cancer is presently under study by NCI at the Clinical Center. The referring physician is then notified of the decision and then, in turn, notifies the patient. Occasionally, it may be necessary to see the patient in an outpatient clinic for a preliminary interview and study.

3. When a patient is accepted, the Clinical Center will correspond with the patient's doctor, and often with the patient, to settle details about when and how that patient will come to Bethesda.

4. Patient Welfare

Every effort is made to protect and promote the welfare of the patient and provide the best possible medical and nursing care.

Research needs may require much longer periods of hospitalization than would be expected in a general hospital. Clinical Center patients also receive a greater number and variety of examinations and

tests than are usually given, and followup examinations are often required because of the research program. Patients will be discharged back to the care of the private physician when the study is completed.

Each proposal for research is carefully screened for risks and merit by committees of physicians, scientists, and nonscientists. The patient's "informed consent" is sought at several points during his or her stay. No tests or treatments are ever given that cause unnecessary hazard to the patient. However, some of the tests may cause discomfort. The patient is always free to decline to participate in any aspect of the research.

For additional information about cancer, write to the Office of Cancer Communications, National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, MD 20892, or call the toll-free telephone number of the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER. (Spanish-speaking staff members are available.)

NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

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